

## SELECTING HEALTHY SNACKS +

Snacks can help us meet the nutritional needs that may otherwise go unmet if only consuming three meals per day. Nutrient intake can be improved by including healthy snacks as part of your daily schedule. Learning about proper nutrition and how to read a nutrition facts label can help you make healthy snacking choices.

### Key Terms

- **Cost per Serving** – The cost of one serving of a food item. The cost per serving can be determined by dividing the total cost of a food package by the number of servings indicated on the nutrition facts label.  
Total cost / Total Number of Servings = Cost per Serving
- **Daily Values (DVs)** – The amount of a nutrient needed daily as determined by the Food and Drug Administration.
- **Fiber** – the part of plant foods that cannot be digested. Fiber is beneficial because it reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, reduces constipation and promotes a full feeling.
- **Food Group** – The basic food groups are grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and protein.
- **Nutrients** – Substances the body needs to grow and function. The six classes of nutrients are: carbohydrates, protein, fats, water, vitamins and minerals. Carbohydrates, protein and fats are the only three nutrients that provide calories.
- **Nutrient-Dense Foods** – Those that provide substantial amounts of vitamins and minerals and relatively fewer calories.
- **Portion Size** – the amount of food eaten at one time.
- **Serving Size** – A standardized amount of a food, such as a cup or an ounce, used in providing dietary guidance or in making comparisons among similar foods.
- **Whole Grains** – Foods made from the entire grain seed, usually called the kernel, which consists of the bran, germ and endosperm. Nutrients found in whole grains offer protective health benefits such as reducing constipation, aiding in weight management and reducing the risk of heart disease.

### Reading Labels When Making Snack Choices

To know what you're getting from your snack, be sure to read the nutrition facts label. Try these tips to make smart food choices quickly and easily.

- Keep these low: calories, saturated fats, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium
- Get enough of these: potassium, fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron
- Check for added sugars using the ingredient list.
- Use the % Daily Value (DV) column when possible: 5% DV or less is low, 20% DV or more is high

Additional items to look for on a Nutrition Facts Label include:

**Serving size:** Look at the serving size and the number of servings per package. Then, determine how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients. Remember, the serving size provided on the nutrition facts label is not a recommended amount to eat; it's a way to let you know the calories and nutrients in a certain amount of food.

**Calories:** 2,000 calories is the value used as a general reference on the food label. However, the amount of calories you need each day depends on your age, gender, activity level and whether you are trying to gain, maintain or lose weight. Be sure to look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories.

You can easily consume your calories on a few high-calorie food items, but you most likely will not get the vitamins and nutrients your body needs. Instead, choose nutrient-rich foods that are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but are lower in calories.

Look at the calories on the label and compare them with what nutrients you are also getting to decide whether the food is worth eating. When one serving of a single food item contains 400 or more calories, it is high; 40 calories is low.

Food packages also contain information about the amount of calories in the food, including various claims, such as:

- Calorie free – means there is less than 5 calories per serving.
- Low calorie – means there is 40 calories or less per serving.
- Reduced calorie or lower in calories – means there is at least 25 percent fewer calories than the regular version.
- Light or lite – means there is half the fat or a third of the calories of the regular version.

Remember that calories come from both food and beverages, so make your calories count!

**Sugars:** The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consuming less than 10 percent of calories per day from added sugars. Since sugars contribute calories with few, if any, nutrients, one should look for foods and beverages low in added sugars. The Nutrition Facts label lists how many grams of sugar the food contains, but does not list added sugars separately. The amount listed includes sugars that are naturally present in foods and sugars added to the food during processing or preparation. Although the body's response to sugars does not depend on whether they are naturally present in food or added to foods, sugars found naturally in foods are part of the food's total package of nutrients and other healthful components. In contrast, many foods that contain added sugars often supply calories, but few or no essential nutrients and no dietary fiber.

High sugar snacks can serve as a quick energy boost but are followed by a drop in blood sugar, which can cause you to feel hungry and tired. Read the ingredient list and make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few ingredients. Some names for added sugars (caloric sweeteners) include sucrose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, corn sweetener, honey, dextrose, fruit juice concentrates, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, maple syrup and fructose. These added sugars provide calories but few or no vitamins and minerals.

The food package can also provide guidance. Sometimes the label will say "sugar-free" or "no added sugars." Even with these claims, it is important to read the Nutrition Facts label.

**Fats:** Look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease. Most of the fats you eat should be polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2015) suggest that a healthy eating pattern limits saturated fats and trans fats. The guidelines also recommend that less than 10 percent of calories per day come from saturated fats. Foods that are high in fats are usually high in calories.

Many food packages also contain various claims regarding the amount of fat in the food. Some examples of these claims are "fat free," "low saturated fat" or "light."

**Sodium:** Sodium is an essential nutrient and is needed by the body in relatively small quantities, provided that substantial sweating does not occur. Reducing sodium intake can reduce one's blood pressure. Keeping blood pressure in normal range reduces an individual's risk of cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2015) recommends consuming less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day. Most of the sodium people eat comes from processed foods, not from the salt shaker. Take a look at the sodium content on the Nutrition Facts label, using it to make selections that are lower in sodium. Use the % DV to determine the levels of sodium in the food product – 5% DV or less is low and 20% DV or more is considered high.

Claims on the food packaging, such as “low sodium,” can also be used to quickly identify foods that contain less salt. However, such claims should still prompt a look at the Nutrition Facts label.

### **Protein-Packed Snacks**

The idea of eating more protein has gained popularity in recent years. Some people may think the way to build body muscle is to eat high-protein diets and use protein powders, supplements and shakes. However, most of us get what we need from the foods we eat. Protein is in many foods that you eat, including snacks, and plays a key role in our bodies. They function as building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, and blood. They are also building blocks for enzymes, hormones, and vitamins. They help build and repair all body tissue, build blood, and form antibodies to fight infection. Proteins are also digested more slowly and, therefore, act as longer lasting fuel.



Source: [www.1hourathlete.com](http://www.1hourathlete.com)  
The photograph above is only provided as an example of common protein powders and is not being endorsed or condoned.

Proteins are one of three nutrients that provide calories, supplying food energy at 4 calories per gram. To keep calories in check, it's good to have higher-protein foods in place of other foods. For example, choose a glass of skim or low-fat milk instead of drinking a sweetened beverage and you'll take in 8 extra grams of protein. You can add lean protein at any meal, but research has shown that adding it to your breakfast may be especially helpful. Lean protein incorporated into meals and snacks is also an easy strategy for working a hunger-fighting food into your diet.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating a variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes, and nuts, seeds, and soy products. While meat, in general, is a good source of protein, it can be high in fat. That's why it is always good to check the Nutrition Facts Label for the saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium content of packaged foods. Processed meats have added sodium, so it's best to choose lean turkey, roast beef, ham or low-fat luncheon meats. Eating peanuts and certain tree nuts (i.e. walnuts, almonds, and pistachios) may reduce the risk of heart disease when consumed as part of a diet that is nutritionally adequate and within calorie needs. Because nuts and seeds are high in calories, eat them in small portions and use them to replace other protein foods, like some meat or poultry, rather than adding them to what you already eat. In addition, choose unsalted nuts and seeds to help reduce sodium intakes.

### **Energy/Power Bars**

A variety of what is referred to as sports bars, energy bars or power bars are offered at grocery stores and in vending machines. Marketing for these bars often leads many people to believe they can work wonders with some purported benefits including burning of fat, buildup of muscle, and improved athletic performance. In terms of nutritional benefits, it depends on the benefits you are looking for.

All energy bars provide energy because energy refers to calories. Energy bars were actually first developed for endurance athletes who had difficulty taking in enough calories to sustain them during their athletic endeavors. It's true that they are a quick and convenient form of energy or calories. However, will these bars energize you? Probably not. If one has not eaten in a while and is feeling slightly fatigued, one of these bars may help take away that sluggishness, but so would a slice of whole wheat toast and a cup of skim milk or juice. However, if one is exhausted due to lack of sleep, for example, an energy bar won't provide any more pep.



Source: breakingmuscle.com

The photograph above is only provided as an example of common protein powders and is not being endorsed or condoned.

On the nutrition side of things, some energy bars contain over 400 calories (more than many candy bars) and up to ten grams of fat. For many people, this may be more than they need or want to take in before exercising. Many energy bars do contain added vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and other important substances, but they are not meal replacements. They do not contain natural fibers, phytochemicals, and high quality protein found in less-processed foods.

For a fraction of the cost, and just as convenient to eat, one might consider some other snacking options, such as:

Granola bars	Bananas	Oranges	Carrot sticks
Juice	Skim milk	Low-fat yogurt	Whole grain crackers
Graham crackers	Mini-bagels		

Energy bars are not a replacement for a healthy lifestyle; it's still important to eat a balanced diet, sleep, manage stress, and be physically active in order to achieve optimum performance. So rather than banking on bars, it's important to be a smart consumer and consider your caloric needs, choose to eat a balanced diet, read energy bar labels carefully (checking for calories, fat and sugar content and think how they fit in with your overall diet).

### **Nutritious Snacking Tips**

- Choose foods high in nutrients and low in fat.
- Eat snacks that include at least two food groups. For example, pair apple slices with cheese or a mini bagel with peanut butter.
- Plan ahead! Plan and pack snacks for when you are on the go so you can avoid less healthful snack choices such as chips and soda.
- Incorporate fruits and vegetables into your snacking plans.
- Aim for whole grain snacks, as at least half of your grains should be whole.
- Remember that calories come from both food and beverages. So, consider for overall, daily caloric needs when choosing snacks. Water and milk are your best beverage choices at snack time.

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